(b) if so, what actions have been taken to enhance the income of Indian?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) Both, number of passengers and passenger revenue has been increasing during the last five years.

(b) Indian Airlines has taken a number of steps like introduction of multiple fare schemes, revision of fares, optimum utilisation of aircraft etc. to further enhance its income.

Airline services to foreign country from Madurai airport

293. SHRI T.T.V. DHINAKARAN: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal to operate service to foreign countries from Madurai Airport;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) In the existing Air Services Agreement between India and other countries, Madurai does not figure as a point of call for the designated airlines of foreign countries.

Indian carriers are free to operate international services from any point in India subject to compliance of guidelines and commercial viability. However, so far, no airline operation has proposed to operate international services from Madurai.

Merchant airports

†294. SHRI SANJAY RAUT: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are going to follow, build and operate policy for construction of new airports in the country now;

(b) whether it is also being considered to allow the private companies to build and operate such airports without any interference of Government under the policy named as merchant airports; and

(c) the details of the decision taken in this regard by Government?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) to (c) The extant policy on Airport Infrastructure facilitates construction of new Greenfield airports in public or private sectors or to

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

be taken up as a joint venture subject to obtaining technical clearance and licence from the competent authority and approval of the Central Government.

Photo identity cards for entry at airports

295. SHRI SANJAY RAUT: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Govenment are considering to issue new and comprehensive smart photo identity cards for entry at all major international and domestic airports of the country keeping in view the increasing threat of terrorism;

(b) if so, the details thereof and by when such smart cards are likely to be issued; and

(c) if not, what are the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) have issued technical specifications for the Smart Cards based airport access control system. While the system software and design as also the Central Database would be monitored by the BCAS, the airport operators would be procuring, installing and operating the system as per the BCAS prescribed specifications. Such an arrangement will facilitate interoperability and enabling monitoring of system security by BCAS.

(c) Does not arise.

Training of commercial pilots

296. DR. E.M. SUDARSANA NATCHIAPPAN: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether there are heavy scarcity of pilots in India as getting commercial pilots licence is costly in India;

(b) if so, whether there is any policy formulated to use the Airports in India to have the accessiblity for training at affordable cost through Government and Private Training Institutes; and

(c) how many institutes are in either area?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) Due to the recent boom in civil aviation in the country, a scarcity of type rated pilots is being felt in the airline industry. Cost of flying training is commensurate with cost of inputs for such training.

(b) Government has taken steps to revive non-operational training institutes/ schools/academies. Upgradation of infrastructure facilities, including airports, has been initiated. Airports Authority of India (AAI) has been entursted with the responsibility of upgrading the Birsi aerodrome at Gondia for setting up a new flying